



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
UPPER CHESAPEAKE HEALTH

**Lyle E. Sheldon, FACHE**

President and Chief Executive Officer

520 Upper Chesapeake Drive, Suite 405  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
443-643-3302 | 443-643-3334 FAX  
umuch.org

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County Council of Harford County  
Patrick S. Vincenti, President  
212 S. Bond Street  
Bel Air, MD 21014

Dear Pat:

When COVID-19 made its official and unwelcome appearance to University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health (UM UCH) on March 8, 2020, our care providers and administrative support teams prepared for the fight against this pandemic. We were unaware what the future would bring, but we knew that we had one common goal—to keep our patients as healthy as possible and keep our team members and physicians safe. As the days, weeks, and months unfolded, UM UCH realized that it must have the ability to adapt to new situations, cases, studies, and education.

Just weeks into the pandemic response, with many unknowns about the disease and a frightened public, UM UCH set up its own mobile specimen collection/COVID testing site at the VEIP station in Forest Hill; notwithstanding storms, heat, humidity, and a myriad of other challenges. Later, we shifted this testing site to our Aberdeen location in coordination with the Harford County Health Department and tested over 21,000 members of the community.

Last December, we opened vaccination clinics at both UM Upper Chesapeake Medical Center and UM Harford Memorial Hospital to community members while pharmacies and physician offices waited on their individual supplies. Our vaccine teams distributed over 35,000 vaccines to those in Harford County.

And in March 2021, a year into the war against the pandemic, UM UCH opened a COVID-19 Infusion Center to provide monoclonal antibody treatments to eligible patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk for serious illness.

Like many hospitals across the country, UM UCH faces staffing challenges and increasing wait times within its emergency departments. However, and as evidenced above, it continues to successfully adapt to the many consequences of COVID. In terms of recruitment, it has had 208 positions filled since July 1<sup>st</sup> - 67 of them were internal promotions or transfer opportunities for UMMS team members. Thirty-eight new nurse graduates joined as part of the residency program, and a patient care technician

program was created as a development and training opportunity for current team members to grow. UM UCH also partners with Harford Community College to expand their nursing program.

UM Upper Chesapeake Health continues to adapt. Recently, we established a multidisciplinary capacity command center that helps to manage daily issues in real time and provide support for frontline nurses and physicians. Each day, a clinical team from different units, including the Emergency Department, collaborates with nursing managers to assess the best and safest care strategy for each patient with a focus on critical care. Together, the group reviews needs, looks ahead to the expected patient care plans for the next day, and removes unnecessary delays by teaming up nurses where they are needed. This approach has a positive impact on the patient experience, allowing patients to move through their critical treatment in a more efficient way. It also improves the ability to safely treat and discharge patients when they are ready and releases a hospital bed for the next patient in need.

UM UCH is currently developing teams of clinical and nonclinical managers to support the needs of the nursing units, depending on their experience. By providing eight hours of dedicated support each month, these individuals can ease the load by engaging in simple tasks such as restocking supplies and keeping patient and team member areas clean and safe.

Emergency wait times are improving, as well. UM UCH received recognition from both Harford County Emergency Services and the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) for its significant decreases in EMS offload times. (Our hospitals lead the Baltimore region).

As UM UCH adapts to the ever changing environment, we continue to put our trust in science. Vaccines protect us from the worst impact of COVID. Our patients and their families—especially those that are already unwell and susceptible to infection, expect us to put their safety first. We have a responsibility to our team members to provide a safe environment. There is simply no choice. We will continue to adjust to the challenges that COVID presents and we will continue to make the hard choices for patient and team member safety.

In good health,



Lyle E. Sheldon, FACHE  
President/CEO  
Corporate Office  
520 Upper Chesapeake Drive, Suite 405  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
Phone: 443-643-3302